

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

PAULA JOHNSON,

Plaintiff,

v.

VINCENT J. LOPINOT, *individually and in his official capacity as Associate Judge of the St. Clair County Arbitration Center,*

Defendant.

Case No. 09-cv-1009

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on the Motion to Proceed *in forma pauperis* (Doc. 2) filed by Plaintiff Paula Johnson. A federal court may permit an indigent party to proceed without pre-payment of fees. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1) (2006). Nevertheless, a court can deny a qualified plaintiff leave to file *in forma pauperis* or can dismiss a case if the action is clearly frivolous or malicious. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i). The test for determining if an action is frivolous or without merit is whether the plaintiff can make a rational argument on the law or facts in support of the claim. *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); *Corgain v. Miller*, 708 F.2d 1241, 1247 (7th Cir. 1983). When assessing a motion to proceed *in forma pauperis*, a district court should inquire into the merits of the plaintiff's claims, and if the court finds them to be frivolous, it should deny leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*. *Lucien v. Roegner*, 682 F.2d 625, 626 (7th Cir. 1982).

The Court is satisfied from Johnson's affidavit that she is indigent. Furthermore, the Court does not find anything in the file to indicate that this action is frivolous or malicious. Therefore, the Court **GRANTS** the Motion to Proceed *in forma pauperis* (Doc. 2) without

prepayment of fees and costs. The Court notes, however, that should it become apparent that the action is frivolous or malicious at any time in the future, it may dismiss the case pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(I).

If Johnson wishes the United States Marshal Service to serve process in this case, the Court **DIRECTS** her to provide to the United States Marshal Service the summons issued in this case, the appropriately completed USM-285 forms, and sufficient copies of the complaint for service.

The Court further **DIRECTS** the United States Marshal, upon receipt of the aforementioned documents from Johnson and pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(c)(3), to serve a copy of the summons, complaint, and this order upon the defendant in any manner consistent with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4, as directed by Johnson.

**IT IS SO ORDERED.
DATED: December 9, 2009**

s/ J. Phil Gilbert
J. PHIL GILBERT
DISTRICT JUDGE